

Assembly Speaker pro Tempore
Christine Kehoe
Chair

Senator Sheila James Kuehl
Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg
Assemblymember John Laird
Assemblymember Mark Leno



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CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY PASSES **HISTORIC DOMESTIC PARTNERS LEGISLATION**

Sacramento -- The California Assembly approved two landmark bills on Wednesday night that would provide significant rights and responsibilities to registered domestic partners in California and reduce discrimination in the workplace.

AB 205, by Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, would grant registered domestic partners nearly all the state rights, benefits, and responsibilities currently granted only to spouses under state law. AB 17, by Assembly Speaker pro Tempore Christine Kehoe, would prohibit state agencies from contracting with businesses that discriminate in providing benefits to an employee with a spouse and employee with a registered domestic partners.

AB 205 received a vote of 41-32 while AB 17 garnered a vote of 42-32. All of the support votes came from Democratic Members of the Assembly while every Republican Member of the Assembly voted against both measures.

"AB 205 takes an important step forward toward equality by providing domestic partners with more rights, and more importantly, responsibilities," said Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg. "As a family, you should be able to take care of each other as state law currently provides to spouses. Your children should have both parents sharing full legal responsibility. If anything happens to one partner, the children will not be taken from the other partner."

"AB 17 is based on a simple premise," said Assemblymember Christine Kehoe. "If public tax dollars are going to be spent by state agencies to contract for goods and services, those tax dollars should not subsidize the discriminatory practices of any contractor that want to do business with the State."

Both bills are sponsored by Equality California working in coalition with Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. These bills are headed to the Senate for its consideration where a policy committee will consider them later on this month.

AB 205 and AB 17 make up half of the legislative priorities of the newly formed California Legislative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus. The other two priority bills previously approved by the Assembly are Assemblymember Mark Leno's AB 196, prohibiting gender-based discrimination in employment and housing, and Assemblymember Judy Chu's AB 458, the Foster Care Anti-Discrimination Act of 2003. AB 458 is scheduled to be heard in Senate Health and Human Services Committee on Wednesday, June 11, while AB 196 is up for consideration in Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, June 17.

The California Legislative LGBT Caucus was originally formed in June 2002. The members include Assembly Speaker pro Tempore Christine Kehoe, the Caucus chair, Senator Sheila James Kuehl, and Assemblymembers Jackie Goldberg, John Laird, and Mark Leno. The caucus' role is to present a forum for the California Legislature to discuss issues that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Californians and to further the goal of equality and justice for all Californians. The LGBT Caucus' formation made California the first state in the country to recognize an official caucus of openly-LGBT state legislators.

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